

WASHTONIAN

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Guess Who's Tryin' In America Esta

Who's Who and
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By Tad Szulc

One day it is the controversy over the Central Intelligence Agency's role in Watergate. Another day it is a piece of inept CIA skulduggery in a remote province in Thailand. Then it is the grudging admission that quite a few American newsmen have been operating as CIA informants abroad. Or the discovery that the agency has been secretly training Tibetan guerrillas in Colorado, and Cambodian and Ugandan irregulars at hidden camps in Greece while bank-rolling colonels on the ruling Greek junta and financing famous European statesmen, and contriving to overthrow the Libyan regime.

The CIA, it would seem, just cannot stay out of the headlines, which is a commentary on the agency itself and on the contradictions in our society. Though it obviously is one of the most secretive agencies in the United States government, the CIA probably receives more publicity than any Washington bureaucracy except for the White House. Most of this publicity is negative, sometimes indignant, often sensationalist, and frequently lopsided. The CIA's track record in the 27 years of its operations largely accounts for this lavish yet unwanted coverage—it's done everything from stealing the text of Khrushchev's secret Kremlin speech denouncing Stalin and the Bay of Pigs, to overthrowing foreign regimes, to running the Laos "Clandestine Army," and possibly outfitting the Watergate "Plumbers"—but it is our endless fascination with espionage and cloak-and-dagger stories that makes readers unfailingly receptive to stories and books about the CIA.

On a more serious level, however, our interest underlines the important point that a secret agency cannot function in utter secrecy in what still is a reasonably open society. The CIA is the subject of continued public scrutiny and debate—even if the scrutiny is superficial and the debate seldom well informed, and even if it is true that the agency has been allowed to run wild and uncontrolled. There is a growing view—reinforced by the Watergate affair—that

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highly sensitized to the role of intelligence agencies here and abroad. But so strange is our morality that we usually tend to accept the national security need for building better and better nuclear arsenals but flinch indignantly at the notion of American involvement in global intelligence operations.

This is where the contradictions of our society come in. However, the reality is that effective foreign policy depends not only on classical political and economic diplomacy, but also on military deterrents and the availability of solid intelligence. To abolish our intelligence services would be tantamount to unilateral nuclear disarmament, something not seriously proposed here. We

consequently to the President. The USIB is headed by the Director of the CIA, who also acts as Director of Central Intelligence and, again in theory, as chief of the intelligence community. William Colby replaced Richard Helms in this twin-post last September (there was a five-month interregnum during which James M. Schlesinger managed to shake up the community quite considerably before moving on to be Secretary of Defense), but there are no indications so far that Colby carries much more weight with the Nixon-Kissinger White House than did Helms. Helms, now Ambassador to Iran, was in deep disfavor with Kissinger. The White House tends to regard Colby as a bureaucrat and administrator (despite his long career as a clandestine

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